



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

DECENT RURAL EMPLOYMENT TOOLBOX:

Applied definition of decent rural employment



DECENT RURAL EMPLOYMENT TOOLBOX

Applied definition of decent rural employment

Decent rural employment refers to any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed by women and men, adults and youth, in rural areas that:

- (i) Respects the core labour standards as defined in ILO Conventions, and therefore:
 - a. Is not child labour;
 - b. Is not forced labour;
 - c. Guarantees freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and promotes organization of rural workers;
 - d. Does not entail discrimination at work on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or other.
- (ii) Provides an adequate living income;
- (iii) Entails an adequate degree of employment security and stability;
- (iv) Adopts minimum occupational safety and health (OSH) measures, which are adapted to address sector-specific risks and hazards;
- (v) Avoids excessive working hours and allows sufficient time for rest;
- (vi) Promotes access to adapted technical and vocational training.

Note 1: The term “rural employment” covers any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed in rural areas for remuneration, profit, social or family gain, in cash or in kind. It applies to waged and salaried workers as well as self-employed workers (including contributing family workers).

Note 2: This applied definition acknowledges the considerable heterogeneity of rural contexts across the world. Designed by FAO to provide a general minimum standard for decent employment in rural settings, it may be adjusted to the specific geographical, sectorial, and socio-economic contexts in which it is to be implemented. Any adaptation should however respect the four core labour standards, which are universally accepted as fundamental principles and rights at work.

Rationale

In its recently reviewed **Strategic Framework (2010-2019)** FAO elevated its commitment to **promoting decent rural employment (DRE)**. Under Strategic Objective 3 “Reduce rural poverty”, a dedicated outcome¹ commits the Organization to support its member countries in improving the job prospects for the rural poor. The organization specifically focuses on rural areas, where most food insecure and poor people live and work.

¹ [SO3/OO2](#) The rural poor have greater opportunities to access decent farm and non-farm employment. **Indicator:** Number of countries with an improved set of policies, institutions and interventions aiming to generate DRE, including for women and the youth. **Output 30201:** Evidence-based policy support and capacity development in the formulation and implementation of policies, strategies and programmes that generate DRE with particular focus on fostering youth and rural women’s economic and social empowerment; **Output 30202:** Policy support to extend the application of International Labour Standards (ILS) to rural areas; **Output 30203:** Technical support to establish information systems and generate data and knowledge on decent rural employment at national, regional and global levels. **Indicator:** Number of knowledge products on DRE developed and disseminated.



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Employment is also prioritized within FAO's corporate resource mobilization strategy, namely under the priority area on "*Rural Transformations: Boosting Smallholder Family Farming and Rural Employment*". Furthermore, many of FAO's corporate processes, guidelines and tools incorporate DRE as a pillar of sustainability and of the Human Right Based Approach (HRBA) adopted by the Organization².

At the global level, FAO engages in several international processes and fora related to DRE, such as the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (UN Youth-SWAP), the UN System-Wide Action Plan of the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) "full employment and decent work for all", the ILO-led Social Protection Floor and Global Jobs Pact initiatives, the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) and the Global Migration Group (GMG). In the Africa region in particular, FAO supports the implementation of the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Action Plan on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa. FAO's 28th Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) explicitly recommended member states to invest in youth employment and skills development and ease youth engagement in agribusiness development.

Following the above commitments, the demand for support on DRE from member countries is expected to increase. More than 60 countries have already explicitly referred to DRE in their Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs). Considering that most CPFs were based on the previous Strategic Framework, this number is likely to increase in the next biennium.

Definitely, the lack of decent employment opportunities is a pressing challenge in rural areas of many developing countries, jeopardizing food security and poverty reduction strategies. Rural poverty is often a problem of poor employment quality, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa where most of the world's poor live and work. Globally, nearly eight out of ten working poor earning less than USD 1.25 per day live in rural areas, corresponding to almost 300 million people¹. They are typically subsistence farmers, own-account or contributing family workers. Furthermore, high child labour, and youth unemployment and underemployment rates represent missed opportunities to harness the investment in the human capital of future generations.

To respond to the global employment challenge, the International Labour Organization (ILO) formulated the concept of decent work and developed a decent work agenda. The decent work agenda rests on four pillars, namely employment creation and enterprise development (Pillar I); social protection (Pillar II); standards and rights at work (Pillar III); and governance and social dialogue (Pillar IV). Decent work has been defined by the ILO and endorsed by the international community as being productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families;

² The right to decent work, together with the right to food, are the two rights considered more directly linked to FAO's work and therefore emphasized in FAO's Project Cycle Guidelines <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap105e/ap105e.pdf> and Handbook on projects <http://intranet.fao.org/faohandbook/area/projects/>. Decent work is enshrined in international law as a fully-fledged human right to which every person is entitled as a means of personal development and socio-economic inclusion. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees everyone "the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment" (Article 23). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) includes also "the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work" (Article 6) and the right to fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind" (Article 7).



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offers better prospects for personal development and encourages social integration; gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all.³ Given the nature of decent work as universal aspiration of people everywhere, this conceptual definition applies to all human beings, all countries and all socio-economic contexts.

The concept of decent work is however difficult to operationalize in rural areas. Grasping its complexity and ambition is easier for formal jobs, which are legally subject to the respect of labour standards. However, it becomes more complex and often sensitive for the majority of informal rural occupations, and in particular for small-scale producers and self-employed rural workers, which are usually not covered by national laws. On the one hand, the lack of an applied definition is often a reason for rural stakeholders to argue that decent work is too complex and ambitious to be applied to rural settings. On the other hand, agricultural and rural development stakeholders are becoming increasingly aware of the centrality of quality jobs for sustainable rural development. It is not uncommon to see agricultural interventions selecting an indicator of “# of decent jobs created”. But what does this really mean? The lack of an agreed definition of DRE risks leading to weak and unmeasurable targets and low accountability.

To facilitate the operationalization of the decent work concept to rural areas, and the agricultural sector in particular, FAO developed an applied definition of DRE. The definition emphasizes six priority dimensions that are crucial to achieving decent work in rural areas, irrespective of rural workers⁴ being covered in labour legislation at national level or relevant conventions being ratified by the country. In particular, FAO makes explicit that, to be considered decent, employment should at least: (i) respect the four core labour standards; (ii) provide an adequate living income; (iii) entail an adequate degree of employment security and stability; (iv) adopt minimum occupational safety and health (OSH) measures, which are adapted to address sector-specific risks and hazards; (v) avoid excessive working hours and allows sufficient time for rest; (vi) and promote access to adapted technical and vocational training. According to each specific country context, some of these dimensions may not be adequately covered by national laws. Even when legislation exists, enforcement might be a challenge due to the informal nature of most rural occupations. The logic behind the applied definition assumes that FAO takes a dual approach to promote better jobs in rural areas: first, extending labour legislation to agriculture and related informal rural occupations; second, introducing innovative solutions to promoting decent work in practice.

The proposed definition implies a degree of simplification and balances inclusiveness and practicality. Acknowledging the considerable heterogeneity of rural contexts across the world, the definition provides a general minimum standard for decent employment in rural settings. However, it may be adjusted to the specific geographical, sectorial, and socio-economic contexts in which it is to be implemented. However, any adaptation should observe the four core labour standards, which are universally accepted as fundamental principles and rights at work.

³ See ILO, 2007. “Toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work/United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, Geneva. First edition”.

⁴ The term “rural workers” is defined, by Article 2 of the Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), as “any person engaged in agriculture, handicrafts or a related occupation in a rural area, whether as a wage earner or as a self-employed person such as a tenant, sharecropper or small owner–occupier.”



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A list of related resources on DRE is provided in *Additional resources* (p. 10). Annex 1 provides the full list of ILO international labour standards (ILS) relevant for rural areas.

Purpose, users and scope

The purpose of the applied definition is to equip FAO's staff involved in DRE promotion with an applied concept which is precise enough to guide the mainstreaming, policy support and measurement of DRE within the frame of concrete agricultural and rural development interventions. Moving forward to a more integrated approach for DRE under FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework, the number of FAO's staff supporting the promotion of DRE is gradually expanding. This applied definition will enable them to answer questions such as "what do you mean by creating decent jobs?" or "when do you can consider a job decent?".

Main users of the definition are therefore expected to be FAO's staff involved in corporate processes of planning, knowledge generation, policy dialogue, standard-setting and capacity development, as well as FAO's staff in HQ and decentralized offices providing technical, capacity development and policy support to member countries. Furthermore, the definition may also prove useful to national policy makers and staff responsible for planning and programme development in the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of Labour, in employers', producers' and workers' organizations, as well as in other public, private or civil society institutions involved in strategic planning for agricultural and rural development.

In terms of scope, the working definition covers rural employment, with a specific focus on the agricultural sector⁵ and related rural occupations, including agro-processing and retailing. Specific emphasis is placed on key target groups facing glaring decent work deficits such as small-scale producers, women and youth. In this frame, the term "rural employment" covers any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed in rural areas for remuneration, profit, social or family gain, in cash or in kind. It applies to waged and salaried workers as well as self-employed workers (including contributing family workers). The definition aims to be applicable to rural workers in both the formal and informal economy. This is considered very important, as rural labour markets are typically characterized by high levels of informality. Small-scale farms represent 85 percent of farms worldwide⁶, and generate mostly informal jobs. In Africa's poorest countries, the informal sector actually employs up to 90% of the working age population.⁷

Clarifications on terminology

Core labour standards are listed in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1998, and are further defined in ILO's Conventions⁸. They include: (i) the effective abolition of child labour; (ii) the elimination of all forms

⁵ A definition of agriculture is adopted that includes cultivation of crops and animal husbandry as well as forestry, fisheries, and the development of land and water resources (FAOTERM).

⁶ See FAO, 2009. "Pathways to success. Success stories in agricultural production and food security", Rome.

⁷ See African Development Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2012. African Economic Outlook 2012.

⁸ The Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work have been expressed and developed in the form of specific rights and obligations in Conventions recognized as fundamental and referred to as the core labour standards: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right



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of forced or compulsory labour; (iii) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; and (iv) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. Irrespective of a country's ratification status of ILO Conventions or its level of economic development, the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work commits member states to respect and promote these principles and rights.

Child labour is defined as work that is inappropriate for a child's age, affects children's education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. Worldwide, child labour remains predominantly a rural issue. The agricultural sector alone accounts for nearly 60 percent of the world's child labourers, or 98 million boys and girls in absolute terms. It should be emphasized that not all work carried out by children is considered child labour. Some activities may help children acquire important livelihood skills and contribute to their survival and food security. However, much of the work children do in agriculture is not age-appropriate, is likely to be hazardous or interferes with children's compulsory education. For instance, a child under the minimum age for employment who is hired to herd cattle for the whole day or a child who works many hours on the family fishing boat and is too tired to regularly attend school would be considered child labour. Child labour is an immense burden on economic development and agricultural productivity, as it interferes with the accumulation of human capital and perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty in rural communities. In particular, "the worst forms of child labour"⁹ are completely unacceptable for anybody under the age of 18, and their abolition should be a top priority. The worst forms of child labour include hazardous work that can harm the health, safety or morals of children – work that is particularly prevalent in the agricultural sector, such as driving tractors, applying pesticides, using motorized or sharp farm tools, actively fishing or pulling fish onto boat.

Forced labour takes different forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. Forced labour is defined by the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) as "*all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily*" (Art. 2.1).¹⁰ Agriculture, together with domestic work, construction, manufacturing and entertainment are among the sectors in which forced labour is most common. Almost 3.5 million people are estimated to be affected in agriculture¹¹. Victims are frequently drawn from minority or socially excluded groups, as is the case in many parts of South

to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

⁹ These forms include such inhumane practices as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour; prostitution and pornography; forced recruitment of children for military purposes; and the use of children for illicit activities such as the trafficking of drugs, as well as forms of dangerous work that can harm the health, safety or morals of children & subject to national determination, by government in consultation with workers' and employers' organisations (ILO webpage on the effective abolition of child labour <http://www.ilo.org/declaration/principles/abolitionofchildlabour/lang-en/index.htm>).

¹⁰ The "[Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children](#)" (ILO, 2012) provide a useful operational definition of forced labour. Forced labour of children is defined as work performed by children under coercion applied by a third party (other than by his or her parents) either to the child or to the child's parents, or work performed by a child as a direct consequence of their parent or parents being engaged in forced labour. It is also understood that poverty and the family's need for a supplementary income are not recognized as indicative of forced recruitment.

¹¹ ILO, 2014. "Profits and poverty: the economics of forced labour", Geneva.



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Asia, Africa and Latin America. Many are migrant workers or poor seasonal workers who move from rural to urban areas, or between distant regions or provinces, in search of work.¹²

Freedom of association refers to the right of all workers and employers to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations of their own choosing.¹³ **Collective bargaining** refers to all negotiations between employers or employers' organisations on the one hand, and workers' organisations on the other, for (a) determining working conditions and terms of employment; and/or (b) regulating relations between employers and workers; and/or (c) regulating relations between employers or their organisations and workers' organisations.¹⁴ In rural areas of developing countries, collective agreements in the agricultural sector have an extremely important role to play in contributing to a shared understanding of the rights and duties of employers and workers at the farm level, especially on plantations and commercial farms. Knowledge and enforcement of the law tend to be weak in rural areas, whereas the provisions of collective agreements are known to, and have been accepted by, the parties concerned. Also, labour codes frequently treat the agricultural sector differently from other sectors and the incorporation of legal provisions within the agreement clarifies the applicable law.¹⁵ Despite the universal recognition of these rights, rural workers, especially in agriculture, face both legal impediments and practical challenges in asserting them.¹⁶ Only 10 percent of rural workers are unionized (ILO, 2013)¹⁷, and agricultural workers are often fully or partially excluded from the legislation guaranteeing this right (ILO, 2011).¹⁸ Many self-employed small-scale producers and informal rural workers are not organized to a degree that would ensure that their voice is being represented in social and policy dialogue. This explains why the applied definition of DRE specifically mentions that for a job to be considered decent, it should **promote the organization of rural workers**. Promotion here refers to the active support of opportunities for rural workers to join groups, producers' associations or rural workers' organizations. This is line with the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), which requires Member States to adopt and carry out a policy of active encouragement in respect of rural workers' organisations. In particular, producers' organizations, contract farming groups, out-growers' associations and other informal groups represent important vehicles to enable rural workers to form representative organizations.

Discrimination at work refers to any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or other (e.g. age), which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.¹⁹ [ILO's report on equality at work \(2011\)](#) shows that many forms of discrimination persist. Women, for instance, continue to suffer serious discrimination in terms of the jobs available to them, their remuneration, benefits, working conditions and access to decision-making positions,

¹² ILO Q&A on forced labour http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS_181922/lang-en/index.htm

¹³ See ILO C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

¹⁴ See C154 - Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)

¹⁵ See ILO, 2008. "[Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction](#)", Report for International Labour Conference, 97th Session, ILO, Geneva, p. 108.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 87.

¹⁷ ILO, 2012. "[Rural Policy Brief – Theme: Empowering rural workers, employers and communities through International Labour Standards](#)"

¹⁸ ILO, 2011. "Unleashing rural development through productive employment and decent work: Building on 40 years of ILO work in rural areas", Governing Body 310th Session, Geneva.

¹⁹ See ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).



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such as in rural producers' organizations. In rural areas, and in the agricultural sector in particular, women still lag behind men in access to land, credit, a broad range of technologies, information, advisory services and training. Furthermore, women continue to be affected by the invisibility of their work in the care economy, which increases their overall work burden and results in time-poverty.

Adequate living income refers to the remuneration needed for a worker to provide his/her family with a basic, but decent, lifestyle that is considered acceptable by the society in which he/she resides at its current level of economic development. For wages, the proposed definition of DRE refers to the living wage²⁰ and not to the minimum wage. While representing an important instrument for setting a binding wage floor, in many countries the minimum wage is set too low to adequately protect workers from poverty and to even cover the basic consumer baskets.²¹ For the self-employed and in particular for small-scale producers and small micro entrepreneurs the capacity to generate a living income²² is considered a crucial dimension of the overall economic and social sustainability of jobs. If people remain poor in spite of working, they simply do not have a decent job.²³

An **adequate degree of employment security and stability** implies that jobs can be considered relatively secure and stable and/or workers have access to social protection mechanisms along the life cycle that compensate for existing instabilities (e.g. through social protection floors²⁴)²⁵. These requirements apply both to salaried/waged workers²⁶, including casual or seasonal workers²⁷, and

²⁰ The notion of a living wage can be found in the preamble of the ILO's constitution as well as, although not the phrase itself, in the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, which indicates that "the elements to be taken into consideration in determining the level of minimum wages shall include (a) the needs of workers and their families, taking into account the general level of wages in the country, the cost of living, social security benefits, and the relative living standards of other social groups". This is also in line with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as regards every person's right to receive remuneration equivalent at least to a wage which makes it possible for workers and their families to lead a decent life". See ILO, 2011. Estimating a living wage: A methodological review. Geneva. ILO Q&As on Business, Wages and Benefits at http://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/business-helpdesk/WCMS_DOC_ENT_HLP_WAG_FAQ_EN/lang--en/index.htm.

²¹ See for instance Víctor Hugo Quesada Arce, 2010. Base study on a living wage methodology for Latin American banana production, report for World banana forum (WBF) and FAO; ILO, 2011 Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 29 Conditions of Work and Employment Programme Estimating a living wage: A methodological review, ILO, Geneva.

²² Income for the self-employed is equal to the value of goods and services produced by the self-employed, net of operating expenses (such as salaries paid, raw materials used, depreciation of machines and instruments and taxes paid), plus any salary received and social security benefits (net of contributions). See ILO [Income statistics](#)

²³ New ILO research has provided a picture of the developing world's workforce in terms of the distribution of workers across five economic classes: (1) the extreme working poor (less than US\$1.25 a day), (2) the moderate working poor (between US\$1.25 and US\$2); (3) the near poor (between US\$2 and US\$4); (4) developing middle-class workers, which are those workers living in households with per capita consumption between US\$4 and US\$13; and (5) developed world middle-class and above, which are those workers living in households with per capita consumption greater than US\$13 per person per day). See also: KILM 18: Poverty, income distribution, employment by economic class and working poverty at <http://kilm.ilo.org/2011/download/kilm18EN.pdf>

²⁴ See R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

²⁵ The applied definition of rural employment focuses on some social protection elements which are considered essential to set a minimum standard for decent employment in rural settings. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that the social protection agenda for rural areas is certainly broader and includes other policy instruments, such as social security, cash transfers, public works programmes, in-kind transfers (including input subsidies and school feeding schemes) and facilitated access to essential social services such as health and education for targeted populations. More information on FAO's work on Social Protection is available on FAO's thematic webpage at <http://www.fao.org/post-2015-mdg/14-themes/social-protection/en/>. See also the note on FAO's work in social protection presented at the 148th Session of the FAO Council (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/029/mi557E.pdf>) and the HLPE Report on "Social Protection for food security" (http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_Reports/HLPE-Report-4-Social_protection_for_food_security-June_2012.pdf).

²⁶ For salaried/waged workers in paid employment, security of employment depends mainly on the type of contract they have and stability on the regularity with which they are able to work. Employees with stable contracts are those who have had a contract or series of contracts on a continuous basis with the same 'employer'. Regular employees are employees with stable contracts, which in addition oblige the 'employer' to pay regular social security contributions and/or are subject to national labour legislation. See ICSE-93 [Resolution concerning the International Classification of Status in Employment \(ICSE\)](#)



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self-employed workers.²⁸ Their *adequate* level will necessarily be context specific and include a notion of progressive realization given the specificities of rural areas and the agricultural sector. In rural areas, employment precariousness is exacerbated by the structural characteristics of rural labour markets, such as high levels of informality, a prevalence of multiple job-holding, casual work arrangements, labour force fragmentation, information asymmetries, seasonality and the uncertainties of agricultural production. In particular, workers need to be protected against risks that may cause a temporary or permanent job loss such as injury and illnesses, crop losses, bad fishing seasons, or market fluctuations, and they need to be granted access to social services²⁹ all through their life. Cash transfers, insurance and other risk-mitigation or risk-sharing mechanisms are important mechanisms in this regard, especially given the limited coverage in rural areas of traditional contributing social security schemes.

Minimum OSH measures is used in this definition to refer to the fact that agricultural workers and employers: (i) are informed about safety and health matters, and know how to safely use relevant machinery, equipment, appliances and hand tools; (ii) adopt adequate preventive safety and health measures for themselves and for workers along the entire supply chain, including the control of hazardous substances (e.g. how to store and handle chemicals) and protection for pregnant and breastfeeding women; and (iii) can access, where feasible, appropriate welfare facilities (e.g. toilets, first-aid kits, lunch rooms). Agriculture is one of the most hazardous sectors, accounting for about half of the 321,000 fatal workplace accidents that occur annually worldwide (ILO, 2012). Considering the informal nature of most occupations, this figure is likely to underestimate the extent of safety risks in the sector. In the case of rural agriculture or forestry enterprises, OSH provisions should comply with the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work and the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture, in line with national policies and systems on OSH. Such Codes do not formally apply to subsistence farming, but many of their provisions may be also relevant for them.

Excessive working hours are determined by national laws and regulations.³⁰ Long hours of work, particularly intense manual labour, contribute to workers' fatigue and lead to accidents on the job (ILO, 2011³¹). Agricultural work is heavy and involves long working hours, which vary according to the season, weather and crops. It is also often undertaken in conditions that carry many risks, including exposure to hazardous chemicals and machinery. The need to work long hours – as the need to engage in multiple jobs – is often associated with low productivity and wages, as well as with poorly adapted technologies and practices. For rural women in particular, long working hours relate to a triple work burden in the productive, reproductive and social spheres. ILS do not give specific

²⁷ For casual or seasonal workers, this refers to the fact that the person is a casual/seasonal worker, he/she can predict to be employed on a regular basis (e.g. because of his/her skills and therefore employability, because of existing mechanisms for facilitating seasonal re-recruitment, access to job placement services, etc.)

²⁸ For the self-employed, including small-scale producers, security of employment inevitably depends on the overall enabling environment for agricultural and rural development, including access to credit and markets and capacity to adapt to climate change.

²⁹ See R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

³⁰ Consult ILO Working Conditions Laws Database. ILO, Geneva. Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail>. The relevant international labour standards set a limit on normal (pre-overtime) hours of 8 per day and 48 hours per week[1] or 40 hours per week.[2] Governments are encouraged to progressively reduce the normal hours of work from 48 hours to 40 hours, taking into account national conditions and practice in order to avoid any reduction in wages.

³¹ ILO, 2011. Code of practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture.



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guidance on hours of work in agriculture, with the exception of the Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47)³² which covers all workers. Instead, the determination of the appropriate limits is left to the competent authority in each country, which often results in agricultural and other informal rural workers being excluded from provisions in national law concerning maximum working time. However, long hours remain an issue for agricultural workers and minimum standards should be established.

The ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture (section 19.2, p. 167) provides guidance in this respect. It indicates that minimum requirements for all workers in the agricultural sector should be that at least (i) daily and weekly working hours are arranged so as to provide adequate periods of rest; (ii) extended workdays (over eight hours) are contemplated only if the nature of the work and the workload allow work to be carried out without increased risk to safety and health; and (iii) a shift system is designed to minimize the accumulation of fatigue.

Technical and vocational training refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work, including practical skills, know-how, attitudes and understanding relating to occupations in agriculture and related rural sectors.³³ Many rural workers are poorly trained and lack technical and entrepreneurial skills adapted to the rural labour market. Women and youth are particularly disadvantaged in accessing training and agricultural extension services. In the progress towards decent work for all, decent jobs need to ensure workers have opportunities for technical and vocational training that are adapted to their needs. Skills development enables workers to grow and upgrade their employment status, increase productivity or diversify income sources. “Adapted” refers to the fact that training should meet the needs of young persons and adults, women and men. In particular, beyond literacy and numeracy, capacities in post-harvest handling, value adding, processing, agribusiness development and management, and climate smart-agriculture are considered of crucial importance for rural workers. Also public employment programmes, should combine the creation of direct work opportunities with training, education or skills development to increase the possibility of beneficiaries finding a job after leaving the programme.

³² ILO, 2008. [“Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction”](#), Report for International Labour Conference, 97th Session, ILO, Geneva.

³³ See also UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (UNESCO, 1989).



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Additional resources and websites

- FAO, 2012. Decent rural employment for food security. *(Leaflet)*
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i2933e/i2933e.pdf>
- FAO, 2013. [Guidance on how to address decent rural employment in FAO country activities](#)
- ILO, 2008. Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work – Country Level Application
[Checklists to detect main employment and decent work aspects](#)
- ILO, 2009. Guide to the new Millennium Development Goals Employment indicators: including the full decent work indicator set http://ilo.org/empelm/what/WCMS_114244/lang--en/index.htm
- ILO, 2013. [Marking progress against child labour - Global estimates and trends 2000-2012](#). International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Geneva.
- ILO, 2014. [Profits and poverty: the economics of forced labour](#), Geneva.
- ILO, [Policy briefs on rural development](#)
- FAO, IFAD, ILO, 2010. [Gender and Rural Employment Policy: Differentiated pathways out of poverty](#), Policy Briefs 1 – 7.
- FAO-ILO website on [Food, Agriculture & Decent Work](#)
- FAO [Decent Rural Employment thematic page](#) and [Child Labour in Agriculture thematic page](#)
- ILO webpage on [rural development](#)



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Annex 1

Main ILO international labour standards (ILS) relevant for the agricultural sector and rural areas³⁴

Rural-relevant international labour standards (ILS) by areas covered	
Freedom of Association	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
	Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11)
	Rural workers' Organization Convention, 1975 (No. 141) and Recommendation (No. 149)
Forced Labour	Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No.105).
Child Labour	Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
Equality of opportunity and treatment	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
Tripartite consultation	Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), and Recommendation (No. 152)
Labour inspection	Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), Protocol of 1995 to Convention No. 81, and Recommendation (No. 81)
	Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129) and Recommendation (No. 133)
Employment policy	Employment Policy Recommendation, 1964 (No. 122) Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169)
	Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) and Recommendation (No. 195)
	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159)
	Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189)
	Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193)
	Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 (No. 198)
Wages	Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery (Agriculture) Convention, 1951 (No.99) and Recommendation (No. 89)
	Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95)
Working time	Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47), and Holiday with Pay Convention (revised), 1970 (No. 132)
Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)	Protocol to Convention No. 155, and Recommendation (No. 161)
	Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)
	Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184), and Recommendation No. 192
Social Security	Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)
	Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 [Schedule I amended in 1980] (No. 121)
	Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117)
	Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and its Recommendation (No. 191)
Migrant workers	Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)
	Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)
Seafarers	Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Conventions, 1975 (No.143) and their accompanying Recommendations
	The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC)
Fisheries	Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) (not yet entered into force)
Indigenous and tribal peoples	Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
Plantations	Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110)
Tenants and sharecroppers	Tenants and Sharecroppers Recommendation, 1968 (No. 132)

³⁴ Source: ILO, 2012. Empowering rural workers, employers and communities through International Labour Standards. Key issues and policy options to protect rural workers' rights, and enable them to contribute to rural development.